

## Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

With Brexit looming ever closer, those of us who live in the UK are preparing ourselves for the worst. If the hard-line Brexiteers get their way we will be dragged back to the dark ages, but with worse hair, clothes and hygiene. And even though, as I write this, hundreds of thousands march in London, while a petition to revoke Article 50 has reached over four million signatures, there is a feeling of powerlessness upon the people, that we are being forced off a cliff no matter what we do.

With politics in this country destroying what little equilibrium we have, the escapism supplied by music and culture is more important than ever. This month I will be discussing some of the recent releases which have been easing my depression and taking my mind to a better place. We have the big hearted rave rush of **Placid Angles**, the bitter-sweet ruminations of **Masha Qrella**, the lush house grooves of **Octo Octa** and **Jayda G**, the widescreen ambience of **Mario Hammer And The Lonely Robot**, **Weval's** smooth downtempo jams, and lots more. BY **JOHN BITTLES**

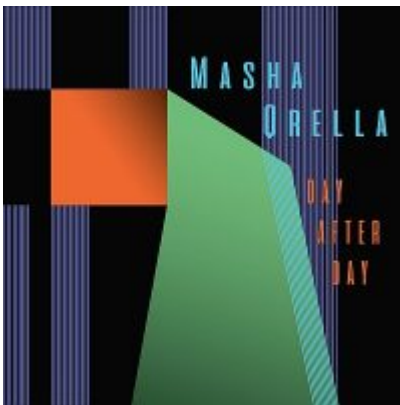
**So, turn the news off and the volume up, and let us begin...**



Twenty-two years since its last appearance, **John Beltran's Placid Angles** alias re-emerges this month with the delicate house majesty of *First Blue Sky*. Out now on **Lone's** always fabulous *Magicwire* imprint, the album finds the celebrated producer mixing dreamy deep house, rave nostalgia, and melodic ambience in style. The title track opens proceedings with some gentle breakbeats, a sunny disposition and just a hint of rave. The aural equivalent of a heartfelt hug, this really is a treat for the ears. Next up, *Angel* starts with some mournful sounding synths before the beats slowly but surely enter the fray. *A Moment Away From You* is gorgeously cute, its gentle keys and soft focus looped chimes giving it an air of optimism all too rare in today's music scene. Also, worth checking are the **LTJ Bukem** style drum n' bass of *Vent*, the heady house of *Bad Minds*, and the sunshine infused swoon of *Breathe Her In*. At times stunningly beautiful, *First Blue Sky* is an album guaranteed to bring some joy to your life. **9.5/10**.



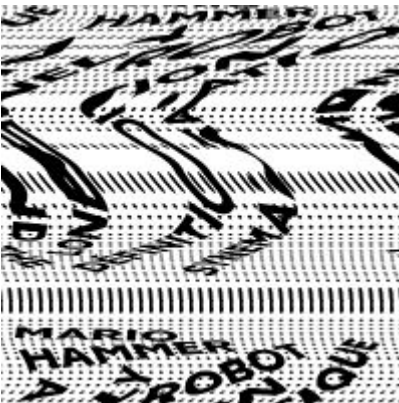
With a series of killer EPs enriching the coolest of dancefloors over the last few years, Berlin-based Canadian **Jayda G** takes the next creative leap forward with *Significant Changes*, her debut LP. Out now on *Ninja Tune*, the album contains nine lush funk and disco-infused deep house grooves. *Unifying The Centre (Abstract)* gets things off to a thoughtful, bleep heavy start, its stuttered beats and laid-back air a gentle introduction to what is to come. Next, *Renewal (Hyla Mix)* utilizes soft vocals, broken beats and a hint of melancholy to create a song full of emotion and depth. *Stanley's Get Down (No Parking On The DF)* is a tongue-in-cheek message to those who remain motionless at gigs. "I see you, with your phone, looking at Instagram. This is the dancefloor baby, this is where you're supposed to get down" Jayda intones over echoing synths and a loose funk jam. Also be sure to check the classic sounding Chicago house of *Leave Room 2 Breathe*, the **DJ Sprinkles** style *Missy Knows What's Up* and the 90s sounding rave breaks of *Sunshine In The Valley*. **9/10**.



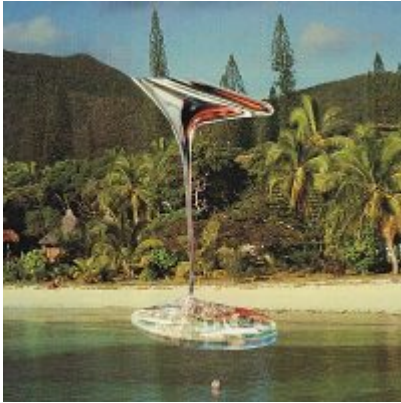
For those of us who were entranced by the subtle beauty of *Keys* back in 2016 it has been a long wait for new music from Berlin native **Masha Qrella**. This month sees us rewarded for our patience with *Day After Day*, a gorgeous new three track EP. Out now as a digital download or on 10" vinyl, the record finds the artist in stunning form. Soft and pensive, the title track exudes a sense of quiet longing which can't help but tickle your heart. With lyrics in English and German, the song's acoustic elements and quiet samples merge with Masha's voice to create six minutes of aural gold. Next we have the hushed acoustic strum of *Long Road*, a track which gently creeps up on the listener before setting up home in your soul. The record comes to an end with the spoken word jazz of *Arthur*, a song which recalls **Deus** and **Velvet Underground** over its twelve-minute running time. Needless to say, if you haven't discovered **Masha Qrella's** music yet now's the time. **9/10**.



Anyone nostalgic for the glory days of rave should make a beeline for *For Lovers*, the excellent new three track EP from Brooklyn artist **Octo Octa**. Out now on *Ninja Tune* offshoot *Technicolour*, the record is a dazzling journey into the joys of dance. Opener, *I Need You* is ten minutes of house music gold. Featuring **Maya Bouldry-Morrison's** strong vocals, the track is a gorgeously atmospheric breakbeat led groover. Sounding huge on a quality soundsystem, the song seems both sad and euphoric, urging you to raise your hands to the sky one minute, shed a tear the next. Flip over for the dark techstep of *Bodies Meld Together*, where dubbed out house and the echoes of drum n' bass collide. If someone told me this had come out on *Reinforced* back in 92 I wouldn't be surprised. The package is completed by the gentle house swing of *Loops For Healing*. Written not long after the completion of their second album *Where Are We Going?* the song will grace any set. **8.5/10.**



After two albums of hushed electronica and emotion-rich ambiance for *Traum Schallplatten* and *BineMusic*, German artist **Mario Hammer And The Lonely Robot** joins the *Cocoon* roster this month with the synth heavy musings of his third LP. Resembling a soundtrack to an imagined movie, *Définition Synématique* is rich and emotional, wasting little time in immersing the listener in its vividly realised world. Opener, *Petrichor* is a collaboration with fellow sonic wanderer **Thyladomid**, the song's thoughtful atmospherics conjuring a plethora of moods. From here, *Verstehen* (also featuring **Thyladomid**) is a lush, romantic lullaby which tugs at the soul, *Polot* contains a welcome techno crunch, *Ayurnamat* is a beautiful **Tangerine Dream** style slice of ambiance, while *Synématique* ends things with a note of disquiet. Containing more than just a hint of nostalgia, *Définition Synématique* is a record as timeless as a smile. **8.5/10.**



Dutch duo **Harm Coolen** and **Merijn Schotte Albers**, who are better known as **Weval**, return to Cologne label *Kompakt* this March with the heavenly house strains of their new LP. Out now, and featuring thirteen melody laden pop/house hybrids, *The Weight* is the perfect soundtrack to watching the clouds drift by. Full of gentle bass pulses, chugging synths and whispered vocals, the album's laid-back jams work together to create a mood-enhancing whole. After the soulful strains of the title track, *Roll Together* merges **Caribou** style electronics with thoughtful trip hop. Other gems include the heavenly trance flourishes of *Are You Even Real*, *Someday's* pensive indie-electronica, the spectral ambiance of *Silence On The Wall*, and the nostalgic hauntology of *Heartbreak Television*. While it can sound a little too tasteful at times, *The Weight* coaxes and seduces over its duration, its lush melodies and sun-kissed air a joy to behold. **8/10**.



Now on its 68th edition, the long-running *DJ Kicks* series seems just as vital as it has ever been. After the wonderful eclecticism of **Leon Vynehall's** mix from February it is American experimentalist **Laurel Halo's** turn to take the reins. Featuring seven exclusives from the likes of **FIT Siegel** (*Penny Rut*), **Machine Woman** (*Just Made Some Jazz Music*), **Ikonika** (*Bodied*) and more, the Berlin-based artist's selection is deeply electronic and shockingly good. Full of obscurities, left turns and surprises, this is about as far from the generic DJ mix album as it is possible to get. **Laurel Halo's** own *Public Art* gets things going with some heady discordance, before tracks by **Stallone The Reducer** (*Always Hate*) and **Red Axes Feat. C.A.R.** (*5 Min*) see the introduction of industrial menace and techno leaning beats. From here the set takes in cold electro grooves, 80s tinged EBM, heady electronica and more. Merging the arty and the propulsive with aplomb, **Laurel Halo's** *DJ Kicks* will be exciting open-minded dancers and mangling heads for many moons to come. **8/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Inside The Rose* by **These New Puritans** - Returning with their first album since 2013, the British indie experimentalists' new record is dense, hypnotic and pretty darn great, **9/10**, *DE:10.02* by **V/A** - Glacial ambiance from **Sun Electric**, the soft house pulse of **Higher Intelligence Agency** and a ten minutes dub techno groove by **Deepchord** help celebrate the De:tuned label's birthday in style, **8/10**, *Fabric Presents Bonobo* by **V/A** - London institution *Fabric* begin their latest mix series with an eclectic selection of warm dancefloor beats, **8/10**, *Vest* by **Robert Solheim** - The first in a two-part album release, *Vest* is full of long, lingering house tracks which touch on ambient, trance and more, **8/10**, *Two Roomed Motel* by **Scott Gilmore** - An album of dreamy ambient-flecked pop music which will bring a little sunshine into anybody's home, **8/10**, *Groove Denied* by **Stephen Malkmus** - The former **Pavement** guitarist embraces electronics on his new LP to produce an invigorating listen which may just be his best album in years, **8/10**, *The Fear Of Dying With Potential* by **Mâhfoud** - Merging traditional instrumentation with electronica, **Mâhfoud's** debut album ever so subtly sucks you right in, **7.5/10**, *V/A Velvet Desert Music Vol. 1* by **V/A** - Curated by **Jörg Burger** (aka **The Modernist**, **The Bionaut** etc), the first edition of *Kompakt's* new compilation series takes in IDM, pop, folk, indie, and more, **7.5/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)